



Dogwood Facts

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Kousa dogwood by Henryhartley at the English language Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0, [\[Wikipedia\]](#)

Dogwood are a Cosmopolitan Family of Flowering Plants

Dogwoods are included in the family Cornaceae and genus *Cornus*. They are a cosmopolitan family of flowering plants with about 30-60 species of mostly small trees and large shrubs. They are mainly deciduous but may be evergreen.

All dogwoods flower. The showy part of the dogwood flower is not the flower at all but the bracts! The true flower is greenish yellow and insignificant. Dogwoods grow best in deep (at least 12 inches) soils with a slightly acidic pH of 6 to 7. They prefer moist, well drained soils that are of average to high fertility and high in organic matter. Dogwood will not grow well on extremely dry sites. This is attributed to their relatively shallow root system. These plants will grow in full sun, light, or partial shade. Zone varies depending on the species.

Varieties to Plant

Some of the favourites include:

C. kousa – native to Japan and Korea, can grow to be a small tree (20-30' tall, 15-30' wide) white flowers with cream coloured bracts with pink tips bloom in the summer, red fruit and scarlet foliage in autumn, do not prune, zone 5-9 – ***C. kousa* var. *chinensis*** – native to China, bracts appear larger than species

C. alternifolia – native to much of Canada also called Pagoda Dogwood, may be grown as a multi-stemmed shrub or as a small tree (15-25' tall, 10-25' wide), produces clusters of small white flowers, zone 3-8

C. florida – native to Eastern Canada including Southern Ontario, and the US, horizontal branching shrub (15-20' tall), inconspicuous flowers in late spring with lovely pink or white bracts, produces red berry-like fruit, zone 5-9

C. alba – native to Siberia, Northern China and Korea, best known for green stems in summer that turn bright red in fall and remain all winter, best colour is with young shoots so prune in early spring, grows as a shrub (5-10' tall, 5' wide), zone 2-7

C. canadensis – common native to much of Canada and the US, also called bunchberry, very low growing (2-6"), used as a woodland garden groundcover, also grows in bogs, the only species that is not a shrub or a tree, produces inconspicuous early summer flowers with creamy white bracts which are followed by red berry-like fruit, spreads via rhizomes, zone 1-9

Preferred Conditions

Shrub dogwoods work well in a shrub or perennial border. Plant them in groups for high impact. The tree dogwoods make lovely specimen plants in the small garden, alongside a house, pond, water feature, or patio.

Care and Pruning

Generally, they do not need to be pruned except to remove aged or dead wood or to shape the plant. However, some are grown for their colourful stems which are best on young growth. Those may be cut back in early spring to a couple of buds from the ground or just cut back one-third of the plant to a couple of buds from the ground. Then, remove branches as they lose their colour.

Problems you Might Encounter

Dogwoods are susceptible to many problems. Borers are a big threat, especially when the plants' trunk is damaged by lawn mowers. Symptoms of anthracnose include large tan blotches or purple-rimmed leaf spots. Infected leaves tend to remain on the tree after they normally would have fallen. Trees often die within two or three years after onset of this disease. These plants are also susceptible to aphids, leafhoppers, scale insects, weevils, nematodes, and thrips. There are many different *Cornus* species to choose from including many natives so talk to your local nursery staff and you will be sure to find one that is right for your garden.

Learn more about Dogwoods [here](#)>